
The rocking of canoe and custom: Shifts in Ambonwari's perception of invisible realm, secrecy and village hierarchy

Le balancement de la pirogue et la coutume : changements de la perception du monde invisible, du secret et la hiérarchie villageoise à Ambowari

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/jso/8760>

DOI: 10.4000/jso.8760

ISSN: 1760-7256

Publisher

Société des océanistes

Printed version

Date of publication: 15 July 2018

Number of pages: 55-62

ISBN: 978-2-85430-135-9

ISSN: 0300-953x

Electronic reference

Daniela Vávrová, « The rocking of canoe and custom: Shifts in Ambonwari's perception of invisible realm, secrecy and village hierarchy », *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* [Online], 146 | 2018, Online since 15 July 2020, connection on 25 July 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/jso/8760> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/jso.8760>

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The rocking of canoe and custom: shifts in Ambonwari's perception of invisible realm, secrecy and village hierarchy

by

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the ways of communicating with the spirits in the Ambonwari village of East Sepik Province in Papua New Guinea. Due to the Roman Catholic Church and Catholic charismatic movement, many customary practices have been abandoned over the last twenty years while some are still occasionally performed. One of the latter is kay wurukrarin (rocking canoe). This practice used to be a traditional way of asking the spirit of the land or/and the creek if one was going to catch fish or kill a pig. The current influence of information and communications technology, mobile phones in particular, has had a significant impact on a variety of practices including communication with the spirits. Besides the practice of rocking canoe, I present a case study of a sacrifice and show how certain traditional ways of doing things can be brought back to practice when one suffers. By modifying their perception of the invisible realm, the Ambonwari are also re-arranging village hierarchy.

KEYWORDS: Sensory ethnography, communication, spirits, mobile phones, customary sacrifice, Papua New Guinea, East Sepik Province

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article examine les modes de communication avec les esprits au sein du village d'Ambonwari dans la province de l'East Sepik en Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée. Ces vingt dernières années, la présence de l'église catholique et d'un mouvement charismatique a entraîné l'abandon de nombreuses pratiques coutumières. Quelques-unes subsistent encore, dont le kay wurukrarin (le « rocking canoe »), le balancement de la pirogue, qui, suivant la tradition, permettait de demander aux esprits – qui résidaient sur la terre et/ou dans les trous d'eau –, si on allait attraper des poissons ou tuer un cochon. Les techniques modernes d'information et de communication – en particulier les téléphones portables –, ont bouleversé nombre de pratiques, dont la communication avec les esprits. Outre ce « balancement des pirogues », j'étudie un cas de sacrifice et montre comment les pratiques traditionnelles peuvent être réinvesties lorsque qu'une personne est souffrante. En modifiant leur perception du monde de l'au-delà, les gens d'Ambonwari réorganisent aussi la hiérarchie villageoise.

MOTS-CLÉS : ethnographie des sens, communication, esprits, téléphone portable, sacrifices coutumiers, Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée, Province du Sepik de l'Est.

“The men killed 10 or 11 pigs. It's because they followed the custom, worshipped the spirits, believed in it. That's why they caught many pigs. We, today's children, eat just greens. We finished all ripe coconuts. Where will we get meat? Who will give us meat? Rubbish! We abandoned this custom. Before they lived with the spirits, but we abandoned them, and so we eat tree leaves. That's how it is now.” (Augustina Awsay, 2011)

Regardless of the abundance of food in rivers, forests and gardens, not to mention the sago swamp where sago starch is extracted from individual palms, people in Ambonwari village do not consider that the evening meal is proper if there is no fish or meat on their sago pudding. Therefore, one often hears, especially when the water level is fluctuating due to rain, that they have no food.

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PHOTO 1. – Augustina fishing, Ambonwari village, 2011 (© Daniela Vávrová)

People do not really like eating plain sago pudding only with greens or coconut scrapings. They say that their plate is empty and that they go to sleep hungry. The Ambonwari do not think of climate change or a reduced supply of meat or fish as resulting from over-hunting or over-fishing. They blame themselves, that is, their own wrong-doings and relationships with God or spirits respectively. Sickness too has always been the consequence of their unresolved disputes, jealousy and greediness. It is believed that people do not have the same respect for their bush-spirits as they had it in the past.¹

The Roman Catholics in 1950s and Catholic charismatics in 1994 took over the Ambonwari's dealings with the invisible realm and the sense of wellbeing which comes with it. Regardless of the renewed interest in the rubber business, in which all the villagers are involved, and recent access to mobile technology (see Telban and Vávrová, 2014), people still feel uncomfortable with the shifts in accessibility of information pertaining to the invisible domain and secrecy that remains in the hands of few.

The invisible world of Ambonwari is inhabited by the spirits of the men's houses. These spirits are believed to have come with the ancestors of individual village clans, where they encountered earth and water spirits (bush-spirits) dwelling in named places of the surrounding environment (see Telban, this issue). Spirits of the recently dead are present too. The invisible world also comprises God and the Holy Spirit, their place often being associated with

the places of white people, which are also the places of the spirits of the dead.

While I was video recording my older "sister" Augustina Awsay explaining to me the practice of rocking canoe, she said that the food which was put into a men's house was eaten by the spirits of the men's house and other bush-spirits, although the people could not see or smell them.² Likewise, she said, they do not see or smell God. They were, however, heard by the bush-spirits in their plea for a successful hunt and they caught as many pigs as they asked for. With God, she said, it is different. One

has to pray in solitude, must be fortunate to obtain the right phone number for God, and still things may not go in the desired direction. Only a few individuals, the most devoted Catholic charismatics, are able to get a personal number that connects them to God (Telban and Vávrová, 2014: 229-30). The engagement with the bush-spirits and the land people inhabit is quite different to the engagement with God and the Holy Spirit. Some people do not have the same trust in God as they had in the bush-spirits. Because God is white, it is often too far away instead of being embodied in them and emplaced in their landscape. However, just as they say that God struggles with their spirits of the land, they also envision that Heaven has to be underground and not somewhere in the sky.

In what follows, I will look at two practices in which bush-spirits were involved: rocking canoe and the sacrifice. I will show how people reflect on their past, mostly abandoned practices of communication with the spirits, on changes that the Catholic Church and Catholic charismatic movement brought into peoples' lives, and how modification of an invisible realm created shifts in accessibility to this realm, secrecy and village hierarchy.

Kay as canoe and the way of life

Ambonwari village is the largest of eight Karawari-speaking villages in Amboin Parish of East

1. In Karawari, showing no respect is expressed by *wapranggan* (doing something with no reason). Thus, a man with no respect is referred to by *waprangsangwarar* (he is just watching, not getting involved). The expression "with no respect" indicates that one does not act when this would be expected, for example, does not get into any kind of relationship with the spirits. When talking about showing respect to the bush-spirit, one should act and communicate in a respectful, positive way: one should offer a pig's head to the spirits in a men's house, or a chicken to the spirits of the land. Respect is shown through active communication and relationship, through giving and receiving (Telban, personal comm, 2016).

2. Link to the video-clip Rocking Canoe: <http://rachel.reflectangulo.net/?artid=178>. This video was made during the fieldwork in 2011 and formed a part of my PhD thesis *Skin has Eyes and Ears. An Audiovisual Ethnography in a Sepik Society* (Vávrová, 2014). The thesis and videos are accessible at: <http://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/28025/>.

Sepik Province in Papua New Guinea.³ Ambonwari are water people. They perceive themselves in these terms in contrast to the Arafundi-speaking Imanmeri who live on the nearby hills. Ambonwari call them *imbikimbir yarmas* or just *kambo* (the mountain people). The Ambonwari myths of origin recall different ancestors travelling on the rivers before joining together into a society of multiple clans (see Photo 2). The main means of transportation used in the area is *kay* (canoe). The word *kay*, however, also refers to one of the main Ambonwari concepts, which can be glossed as manner, habit, way of doing things, being and life generally (for an extensive discussion of the concept of *kay* see Telban, 1998: 40-42, 222-230, and *passim*). Although it may be coincidental that the same term is used for both canoe and for the way of doing things, it nevertheless appears to fit well with the people who spend most of their time on rivers and creeks. People talk, for example, about *kupambin kay* (the way of the ancestors) or *imninggan kay* (the way of the village), both associated with the life in the swamps and on the water. Large canoes once used in raids and trading voyages (for the Eastern Iatmul village see Silverman, 2001: 76), have names, which are owned by individual lineages and clans, and are perceived as beings on their own (Telban, 1998: 174-175). They have their own *arim* (skin, body), their own *wambung* (interior, thoughts and feelings) and their own *kay* (way of doing things). Small personal canoes are extensions of people who use them, merging with them into their ways of paddling canoe. A piece of an old *kay* (canoe) is also used to make a bench for sitting and to bury a deceased person.

The canoe is also used in communication with the spirits. Communication with the spirits has a long history for the Ambonwari. Many practices have been abandoned over the years while some are still occasionally used. One of the latter is *kay wurukrarin* (rocking canoe). As Telban writes:

“When in the past Ambonwari went to fight with their neighbours, the rocking of a canoe would induce the men to return to the village. It was interpreted as a form of advice from the spirit. It often happened that the men asked a canoe about their chances before they paddled off towards their enemy.” (Telban, 1998: 174)

This practice also used to be a traditional way of asking the spirit of the land or/and the creek if one was going to catch fish or kill a pig. When the canoe in which one was sitting did not rock at all, it provided a negative answer:

“I won’t catch any fish here” or “I won’t be successful in my hunt.”

3. The census conducted in 2011 has shown that there were 784 Ambonwari villagers, 103 of whom were living away from the village. Women (153) outnumbered men (122). The majority of the villagers were children and minors up to 18 years of age (406).



PHOTO 2. – The founders of Ambonwari village, 2011 (© Jeffrey Donald)

If the canoe rocked twice from side to side, it meant “Yes, I will catch something”. The men, who went hunting, people say, were usually successful after receiving a positive answer. When one asked the spirit about something else, for example, about an absent person, a sign soon arrived about the person’s return. Nowadays, as Augustina said:

“We have a phone which often misleads us and we catch nothing.”

What Augustina meant was that only some people have the phone numbers of God and the spirits of the dead, and that the latter often mislead the people who think that they got connected to a particular person while in reality it was only the spirits who made them believe they would have luck in hunting (Telban and Vávrová, 2014). With the use of new technologies, a mobile phone in particular, communication entered a new era of comprehending and explaining a diversity of sounds and signs. This is especially so in the area without a stable mobile phone network. People get puzzled and suspicious, as there are infinite possibilities for finding the invisible domain behind the visible world. One could say that the most powerful and knowledgeable world actually exists in the invisible domain while everything that materializes in the visible world of the people is just bits and pieces of that domain. These casual appearances in the material world are thus more like the signs indicating the invisible domain and “truth”, which remain constantly hidden from the people.

The sin and the lost respect

The customary rituals in the past, just like Christian ceremonies in the present, produce something that people look at, conceptualize, and



PHOTO 3. – Ambonwari village, 2011 (© Daniela Vávrová)

use for the creation of the future. The customary rituals, in contrast to ordinary Christian practices, incorporated much more action than talking. Talk is the main concern of the ordinary Catholic Church in the village. However, people also say that it is because of talking – gossip, concocted stories, wrong or unjustified accusations – that people fight and get sick, regardless of their regular confessions and prayers. These fights and sickness appear in the visible realm. This suggests that *luk save* (knowing by seeing) in Tok Pisin, Melanesian lingua franca, is an important component in anything one does. Making new things visible is also important for the transformation of people's beliefs and practices. The engagement with the bush-spirits and the land people inhabit is quite different to the engagement with God and the Holy Spirit. While bush-spirits are nowadays more or less neglected, people try to embrace the new technologies to enhance their communication with the spirits of the dead and God.

During our rocking canoe trip Augustina and my village brother's daughter Margaret explained very clearly that to worship the bush-spirits is a sin these days. One is successful in his or her endeavours by praying, confessing, following the Bible, and communicating with the Holy Spirit. There are some Ambonwari, however, who do not belong to the Roman Catholic Church or the Catholic charismatic group, but they keep tradi-

tion alive in continually changing conversations with the bush-spirits, God and the Holy Spirit. The Church gave rise to new forms of communication with the invisible world. The new technologies too, challenge the traditional ones. The leadership of the two most important clans, the Crocodile clan and the Bird of Paradise clan – also recognized founders of the village – is constantly put on a test by those members of other clans who can reach to God and the Holy Spirit. It is the ability to communicate with God and the Holy Spirit and make things visible that makes one a successful healer and spiritual leader. There is an obvious shift going on in the hierarchy of secrecy, and consequently in the hierarchy of the village.

Augustina and Margaret explain that nowadays there is a lack of respect for the bush-spirits and the spirits of the men's house. Since the Catholic charismatic movement reached the village in 1994 (not in 1975 as Margaret says in the video-clip) things have changed a lot. People have been trying to fully embrace the Holy Spirit and God and put any thought about the spirits of the land aside. The old ways are supposed to be forgotten. A new type of communication should emerge. The older generation, to which Augustina and Margaret in their late fifties belong, maintains the view, however, that the Holy Spirit simply cannot ensure successful hunting or fishing. They know this from their experience. They know that it is only the spirits of the land who have the power to do so because they live there. The bush-spirits know the place, the surroundings, as well as *kupambin kay* (the way of the ancestors) and *immanggan kay* (the way of the village).

So, how can the villagers embrace the new technology and invent a new way of communication with the white God? It is rather confusing how the abstract phone numbers and the mobile connection of a few can lead to successful hunting and fishing and wellbeing of the villagers. What is different in this kind of connection is the method of negotiation. It is a singular man who in privacy is able to dial the number of God or the Holy Spirit and talk to him. It is the individual praying of a woman for a successful fishing trip or hunt. The Catholic charismatic sessions are similar in their communal power to the rituals of the past. But the outcomes, in the opinion of many, are nowhere near as powerful as when the bush-spirits are involved.

The visible part of it, like offering of a pig's head or big fish and the betel nuts to the spirits of a men's house, has been abandoned. These practices not only established and maintained the relationships between people and the powerful spirits but also demonstrated the kind of respect the villagers paid to the spirits. The customary practices together with the gender taboos created a firm village law. This form of respect was rewarded and

both positive and negative events had reasons everyone could see. The ordinary Catholic prayers and songs are, for the Ambonwari sceptics, simply not sufficient. What is missing is the visible and tactile connection to land and water. Without this connection, especially when people depend on and are living from the land and creeks, the Ambonwari are worried about their present and future wellbeing.

Visible and invisible in everyday life

Things that were in the past hidden in the men's houses and were strictly prohibited to be seen by women and children do not exist anymore (Photo 4). In 2003, nine years after the arrival of the Catholic charismatic movement, the spirit-crocodiles, flutes, slit-drums and carved posts were put outside the men's houses for everybody to see them and then taken to the forest to decay. The men's houses were either destroyed or changed into recreational houses accessible to everyone. Nowadays, as the charismatics say, everything should be *ples klia* (in an open space), in Tok Pisin.

In everyday life, to hide or make things inaccessible is considered an insult. Desire, jealousy and resentment are openly shown. More things, more looks, more cravings to possess. The saying *aman-gok* (me too) means that everyone would like to have all those things that the other one has. Such an attitude creates contradictions when talking (everything should be *ples klia*) and is negated by the practice of hiding things. People's houses are usually very empty. Bags full of things are hanging on the walls, or things are hidden in the boxes and placed under the roof. Unless the majority of the people in the village possess the same thing, it needs to be hidden, not to catch and seduce the eyes of others. To give a person something special in front of others – if this is not an organized event – is to humiliate the receiver as well as the onlookers. The people often come at night to get those things, which were brought to the village on their request. Although they will still be seen, the darkness will cover their embarrassment and soften the look of the watchers. Nowadays, the knowledge should be also accessible to everyone. It is visibility and accessibility, which count. For example, not anyone can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit – but everyone can try. It is not anyone who can heal the sick ones or bring wealth to the community. It is *wambung* (interior) or agency of individuals, which enables them to do so; it is this same *wambung*, which has to be disclosed by its generosity.

There are several levels of looking at the visibility of things. Sometimes to see the hidden side, as Merleau-Ponty talked about seeing of all the



PHOTO 4. – Drawing of Yanbonman men's house in which secret spirit-crocodiles, flutes, slit-drums, and carved posts were hidden from women and children, 2011 (© Jeffrey Donald)

sides of a lamp, it is sufficient to move a lamp a bit (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 14). If one does not see something, it does not mean that it is not there. Often one sees what he or she wants to see and not what is really there. It is similar with the Ambonwari men, who compete with each other for knowledge, power, and wealth. When I talked with Augustina's late son Jack Amun about his healing practices, I was told that the people want to see *kangginging*, something responsible for their pain (a stone, for example). They want to see a visible proof of their illness.

People have noticed that many did not recover when others just prayed over them without producing any visible signs. That was also one of the reasons why the young men living in towns, who were in 1994 the last initiated Ambonwari men, were called back to the village to help in the curing of the sick ones. Their return in 2011 resulted in three different ways of healing the sick in the village: one in accord with the old customary practices, another following the ways of the Catholic Church where the precedence is given to prayers, and yet another pertaining to the Catholic charismatic understanding of more bodily and therefore more immanent relationship with God and the Holy Spirit.

Jack Amun and Jeffrey Donald, who returned to the village in 2011, were two new village healers following customary procedures of solving the problems enriched by their skills and knowledge, which they gained during their life in towns. The last traditional village healers had taught both of them before the Catholic charismatic movement whipped away the major customary practices. The villagers believe in the special powers of those who lived in towns saying that they acquired new skills. Jeffrey and Jack extract with their hands different objects from people's bodies as a proof of pain, such as, for example, a piece of ginger covered by lime, a shell, stone, or piece of glass. This is a common practice in the Sepik, and as Tuzin writes for the Ilahita Arapesh

“a sign is needed, something to guide attention to what is ‘really’ happening.” (Tuzin, 1980: 263)

In other words, people need to see something happening in the visible world (see also Telban, 2008: 231-2, 2017, for example). They are aware that there is also an invisible domain. A connection between visible and invisible domains is then established through signs (images). People take the appearance of conventional signs as proof.

“In the process, a kind of metaphysical truth is generated: gestures of belief are taken to be evidence of a reality that is created by those very gestures; the sign marks the intersection of appearance and reality.” (Tuzin, 1980: 265)

The healers then monitor the sick person, discuss their recent whereabouts and activities, and prescribe a remedy in the form of settling the disputes and arguments within the sick person’s family.

The revelation practices

Robin, the first Ambonwari Catholic charismatic leader, follows his dreams and uses the gift of the Holy Spirit to help the people in a different, more spiritual way. He has the capacity to creatively invent new ways in the prayers and healing sessions. He does not extract any objects from the body, but with his hand pulls out the otherwise invisible negative energy. This happens when Robin is connected to God and he feels this in his shaking hand. The sick person should almost immediately feel relief. Although at its beginning almost every villager joined the Catholic charismatic movement, after fifteen years the group has shrunk to only two dozen of the most faithful followers. At the same time, those who became active in the village Catholic Church secured their own positions in its hierarchy as well as in the hierarchy of the village. They belong to the third group of those who heal the sick. Felix, one of the four ministers of communion, told me that it is in his dreams where he meets the spirits of sick people and brings them back into their bodies. If he is too late, the spirit will not return and the sick person will die. His healing procedures are very similar to those of the Parish priest who visits the village every couple of months from Amboin: listening to people’s sins, helping them in prayers, but avoiding any kind of physical contact. The dreams, however, and the capability of meeting the spirits of the living people (*anggiindarkwi*) are additional assets, which not everyone has. For the Ambonwari, seeing is knowing, which necessarily incorporates seeing in dreams. The dreams are

a sort of visual evidence when one sees what is otherwise invisible (see Telban, this issue).

“What we dream about, we believe will happen”, the people say.

The customary practices of two healers, Jack Amun and Jeffrey Donald, were challenged by some Catholic Church leaders saying, that “the human body is special”, and one should not extract any objects from it. They said: “God did not do that.” On the other hand, some villagers went quite far in their belief in God when they started to put offerings in the church with a plea to harm someone. They were thinking of taking revenge on someone without facing the person but paying God to do the job. When this practice was discovered it was immediately criticized during the Sunday mass. However, the practice in the local church was reminiscent of old customary practices, when the spirits of the men’s house participated in all kinds of conflicts and were also offered food and money (shells). What is happening in Ambonwari in recent years is a shift in secrecy and in who has knowledge of and access to the invisible domain. On the one hand, following an egalitarian mode of existence, things should be visible and accessible to everyone. On the other hand, there is always an invisible part, which is accessible only to a chosen few. Whatever is seen, it is always questioned beyond its appearance and the invisible realm becomes the main focus of people’s exploration and speculation. The invisible world is the one where the actual power is hidden. One would say that the world of the spirits of the land and the spirits of the dead is concealed and generally not visible. However, it is visible in dreams and visions. All the white skin people belong to the world of the dead ones. The white people who visit the Ambonwari are often perceived as their dead who have returned to the village (Falck, 2016: 3-14, 178-180; Hirsch, 2008: 148; Lattas, 1992: 47-48, 1998: 223, 2010: 104; Leavitt, 2000: 306; O’Hanlon, 1989: 7-8; Telban and Vávrová, 2010: 23-24, 30; Tuzin, 1997: 16, 128-133; Vávrová, 2014: 35-38, 89-93, 217, 226-246).

The sacrifice

In August 2011, Jeffrey Donald and Jack Amun were called to find the cause of an illness that befell a young mother and to participate in the sacrifice of a chicken. By showing a respect and praising the main village bush-spirit and other spirits of the land they were about to break the curse. During the last couple of years there had been a strange series of deaths befalling the same lineage. A mother of a young sick woman requested the



PHOTO 5. – John's new outboard motor canoe, Ambonwari village, 2011 (© Daniela Vávrová)

traditional and Catholic charismatic healers to help her in breaking this curse. A bloody cloth had been found in the mouth of a dead python. The same cloth was used some months previously to wrap the placenta and umbilical cord of a newborn baby. Then, it was buried in the bush, in very close proximity to the village where one of the Ambonwari men's houses used to stand. It was a special place where the bush-spirits lived. It was also a cemetery: the skulls of several Ambonwari victims were buried there. Burying of placenta at this same place was perceived by the villagers as irresponsible and could only provoke the bush-spirits to act. The two young healers sacrificed a chicken and with its blood, washed away the dirt of the placenta from the spot where the cloth had been found. Then they buried the dead chicken into the ground for the spirits to feast on it. In this way, they showed respect to the bush-spirits. Jack said that the young people do not know the old stories. Only the elders know what had happened to that spiritual place and to whom it belongs. People should not think, Jack continued, that the bush-spirits have left these places and the village because of the Catholic Church and Catholic charismatic movement. Jeffrey called young men to participate in the washing of the ground and told them that the dead snake with the cloth in its mouth was the spirit who had returned. If they sprayed the place with the holy water, it would not help. Obviously, the invisible world of the bush-spirits is far more powerful than the holy water. They did not know the solution, Jack said, but they had to try to save the young woman and prevent further deaths in the clan. If the prayers and medicine did not help, the sacrifice was the only way to go. The young woman who was sick, however, died in the hospital in Angoram a few days later.

The following conversation continued about the case. I was told that since the Catholic charismatic

movement reached the village, people do not respect the bush-spirits anymore. They abandoned them, but the bush-spirits have not left. The villagers often seek help from them when it is already too late. The suffering family had built their houses on the special piece of land that used to be a taboo place. Apparently, this was the cause of the trouble. The members of the Catholic charismatic movement and the Roman Catholic Church maintain that bush-spirits should simply be ignored, that they are powerless, and that people should be free to build their houses wherever they wanted. But not everyone agrees.

At present the Ambonwari are split into several groups: The Roman Catholics, Catholic charismatics, traditionalists, and those who act as atheists. When death governs, their powers unite. The land they live on and live from is also shared with the bush-spirits. Disregarding them may escalate into more deaths.

Concluding remarks

There is an interesting point in the event of rocking canoe which goes beyond simple worship, material image, or secret power. It is the way of knowing how to communicate across the visible and invisible worlds. It is also the trust the villagers can develop with the white spirits and in the same time, keep their own spirits of the land happy. This means making of a new Ambonwari way of thinking and sharing the knowledge. The transformation of village practices is a natural and complex move. The direction of transformation is a combination of the experienced but reinterpreted past and imagined future. That means that not only the visible world is changing but the invisible one too. A shift within the secret domain means also a shift within the invisible domain revealing itself through shifting hierarchy and respect on the ground.

The communication with the spirits is also dangerous and there are not many Ambonwari men who are capable of doing it. The integration of new technologies into communication can be very useful. The young generation especially will agree with this. The many secret things became oblivious and they keep disappearing but many new ones are created in combination with the old ones. The combination is inevitable. The point from the rocking canoe, however, reminds us about the nourishment of the relationships with the closest ones first – the living ones here on the land and within the land – and then the rest – the

Holy Spirit being virtually everywhere: in Europe or Papua New Guinea.

Throughout my fieldwork, it became clear that the invisible world is actually always present alongside the visible one. People constantly aim to get into the invisible domain and thus get access to wealth, spiritual power, and secret knowledge. What people see are only signs confirming their conviction that the real power lies in the invisible domain. It is like digging into the earth and finding what is hidden underneath (a spirit of the land appearing as a huge python, for example). For the Ambonwari, the things, which they can hear, touch, and see, are often signs of a hidden, invisible domain. In other words, the visible *arim* (skin) is full of signs but the revelation can only come from *wambung* (insideness)!

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